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Leave Scientologists alone

It is appalling to see the intense scrutiny and negative examination of the Church of Scientology by reporters who assume expertise in the subject. Obviously, the subject is sensational: "Church of Scientology declared a bona fide religion by IRS!" But to stir it all up again, to continue to try to get the fire going again, is not only insulting to Scientologists, but I would say to all religions.

Has it been forgotten that the right to religious worship is one of the founding cornerstones of this country? Would you like to see your personal beliefs — be they Jewish, Christian, Buddhist — spread out under a microscope and referred to out of context and in highly exaggerated tones? Enough is enough. Let the church be!

Kate Sweet, Clearwater

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Re: *IRS: Scientology is a tax-exempt religion*, Oct. 13.

In response to this headline, a recent letter writer stated: "Scientology is not a religion because it was written by a *fiction writer*. It definitely ought to be taxed heavily."

I agree wholeheartedly. However, it seems that this writer is very shortsighted.

All religions, including Judeo-Christianity, Hinduism, Christian Science, Mormonism, *et al.*, were all written by fiction writers and, therefore, *all* definitely ought to be taxed heavily.

Jerry Morgenroth, St. Petersburg

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Re: *Ruling may cost Pinellas millions*, Oct. 14: The IRS' exemption of the Church of Scientology may doom the county's efforts to collect a tax bill exceeding \$7.9-million.

"In Pinellas County, more than 3,000 parcels already qualify for a similar exemption, taking more than \$1.2-billion in land and buildings off the tax rolls."

Isn't it time that people of all faiths recognize the inequities of tax-free churches? Why shouldn't churches pay at least a "maintenance" tax? Like

every home and business owner, churches also are provided the protection of fire and police departments, along with other public services.

Ray A. Blett, St. Petersburg

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I feel compelled to respond to the recent letter writer who defended Scientology by stating, "... We are not animals . . . you will not find any Scientologists convicted of rape, armed robbery . . . or murder." I know almost nothing about Scientology, but I do know that Charles Manson — who I'm sure the letter writer will acknowledge to be a fine, upstanding citizen — professes to be a Scientologist, and quoted L. Ron Hubbard's work extensively. (See Vincent Bugliosi's *Helter Skelter* for more information on this.)

My point, of course, is that evil people are everywhere, in all religious faiths, and it is wrong for the letter writer to proclaim all Scientologists as saints when she has absolutely no way of verifying this.

Sharon Henry, St. Petersburg

'Welcome relief'

At this time of high-pitched claims and counter-claims about the Clinton health reform package, it is a welcome relief to read Carol Gentry's carefully reasoned, quietly stated analysis of the issue.

Mort Lunsford, Brandon

Correction, letters

The Oct. 22 letter to the editor titled *Celebrate the United Nations*, from Marion Derby of the League of Women Voters International Relations Committee in St. Petersburg, contained a typographical error. The letter should have said, "Through its specialized and related agencies, ranging from Food and Agricultural Organization and International Atomic Energy Agency to UNICEF and the World Health Organization, the United Nations provides a way for all nations to work together to answer many of the world's needs."

Share your opinions

We invite readers to write to us. Letters for publication should be addressed to *Letters to the Editor*, P.O. Box 1121, St. Petersburg, FL 33731, (FAX number, 893-8675). They should be brief and must include the handwritten signature and address of the writer.

Letters may be edited for clarity, taste and length. We regret that not all letters can be printed.